

Congressman William Lehman



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REPORTS FROM WASHINGTON

October 19, 1984

Dear Friends:

Knowing that you are very supportive of efforts to preserve and protect our environment, I thought that you might be interested in this *Congressional Record* statement. This statement discusses the outstanding efforts made by Alice Cohen on behalf of our environment in South Florida.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill".

WILLIAM LEHMAN
Member of Congress



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of America

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House of Representatives

ALICE COHEN

HON. WILLIAM LEHMAN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 26, 1984

Mr. LEHMAN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the Miami Herald recently printed an article about Alice Cohen who has been a determined fighter for the preservation and maintenance of our environment in south Florida.

Alice Cohen has fought against political inertia, public indifference and her own physical and medical handicaps. There are certainly many others like Elmore Kerkela, Wesley Wilson, and Maureen Harwitz who have fought the same environmental battles. However, I believe a plaque should be embedded in the rebuilt natural bridge in Arch Creek Park naming the bridge for Alice Cohen. I hope that Dade County will decide to do this.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to share the following article about the efforts of Alice Cohen with my colleagues:

ARCH CREEK PARK GETS MONEY TO REBUILD BRIDGE

(By Phil Kuntz)

On a February afternoon in 1973, Alice Cohen stood with a federal geologist on the only natural bridge in South Florida in what is now Arch Creek Park. She was showing off land for which she had waged and won an environmental battle.

"I said, 'How long you figure this bridge is gonna be here'" she recalled Friday. "He said, 'It's been here since the ice age, and that's thousands of years ago, so it will probably be here for thousands more.'"

That night the limestone bridge collapsed. Thursday, the Metro Commission approved a budget that includes \$50,000 to rebuild the bridge at the county park, 1855 NE 135th St.

"I've been waiting for a long time for this to happen," said Cohen, now 68, suffering from cancer and crippled by arthritis.

"I'm determined I'm gonna live to see it. I know that the only thing that helps me along is that bridge. They better hurry up and fix it so they can get rid of me."

The appropriation grew out of an agreement reached last year between Dade County and the Arch Creek Trust. The county will pay the \$96,000 cost of structurally rebuilding bridge with concrete and iron as soon as the group raises \$24,000 to restore the bridge to its natural appearance, said William Bird, Metro parks director. Bird said the county will take the additional \$46,000 out of a contingency fund.

The trust, through fund-raisers and donations from its 100 members, has about \$6,000 saved, said Vice President Elmore Kerkela.

Lewis VanDercar, a Zephyr Hills sculptor, agreed to take on the restoration project years ago. He said Friday that by using various coloring techniques, "I can make the rock look like it's old. It'll be just like the old natural bridge."

The Arch Creek hammock was once the site of a Tequesta Indian settlement, and the bridge was the only way for them to travel south of the creek's 20-foot banks. It was also once part of old West Dixie Highway.

The Arch Creek Trust was formed in 1981 to better organize area residents like Cohen, whose not-always-successful crusade against development included lying in front of bulldozers. Cohen's efforts began in 1972 when she lobbied against plans for a used car lot in the hammock. The state later bought eight acres of the site and leased it to Dade County.

Now the trust has its sights set on expansion. At its urging, state officials are working on a land trade with some owners of land surrounding the park, Kerkela said. The aim of the group is to restore the park to its natural state. Trees not native to the area are being removed and native trees are being planted, he said.

For a time this year, as those interested in the park heard news of the county's financial woes, it looked as if money for the bridge might be delayed, said Paddy Cunningham, director of the park. She called the commission's move "a pleasant surprise."